

Food Safety Matters but Legislation Will Hurt Farmers

July 29, 2009

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Do not vote in favor of H.R. 2749 thinking that today's vote is a throwaway one to demonstrate one's support for food safety.

We are all interested in food safety. It matters. Those of us involved in agriculture care about food safety. It is a matter of life and health for our consumers, and for the farmers and ranchers it is a matter of their livelihood. Even the rumor of unsafe food causes commodity prices to fall and farm incomes to decline.

While I am unable to tell my colleagues the exact details of this bill, I can say with certainty there are significant adverse consequences to farmers, especially our smallest ones, and those consequences include on-farm performance standards, record-keeping requirements, arbitrary record access requirements and registration fees, none of which may actually improve food

safety.

The reason I am unable to describe the details of this bill is that those details became available only this morning. The bill before us was amended, striking everything after the enacting clause and inserting a new text. The entire bill as it existed yesterday was deleted and new language put in its place. There have been few hearings on this bill, constant redrafting by a few people outside the committees, and no referral to the Committee on Agriculture.

Do not let the Suspension Calendar fool you. This bill is substantive legislation with uncertain consequences. Vote "no";